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ABSTRACT

A 1994 review of international policy research on accountability in education indicates that there is widespread concern over policy content, processes, and consequences. Current purposes tend to be polarized by a simplistic dualism--hyperindividualism versus communitarianism. Policies and practices often exhibit neocentralist assumptions. This paper argues that accountability policy research might need to be reframed by: (1) using a postpositivist and coherentist epistemology; (2) using broad educative values so that policy communities can recapitulate education, society, and democracy while also demonstrating how well learners have learned substantive content; and (3) breaking the accountability gridlock of technical, client, and professional interests with participative policy-action research to generate multiple legitimacies. Evidence from England and Wales suggests that the New Right politics of choice and the attempt to localize public accountability has instead generated a politics of resistance and sharpened demand for responsive, public, and educative forms of accountability. The paper hypothesizes that neocentralism is being challenged by a secular demand for subsidiarity, pluriformity, and complimentarity. Eight tables are included. (Contains 66 references.) (Author/LMI)

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R J S Macpherson, University of Tasmania

Presented to the AERA Conference, New York, 8-12 April, 1996

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Reframing Accountability Policy Research with Postpositivism, Pluralism, Democracy and Subsidiarity

R J S Macpherson, University of Tasmania

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Recent international accountability policy research indicates that there is widespread concerns over policy content (aims, values, characteristics), processes used (performance data, knowledge, power), and consequences (for education, administration, community). Current purposes tend to be polarized by a simplistic dualism; hyper-individualism versus communitarianism. Policies and practices often exhibit neo-centralist assumptions. It is argued that accountability policy research might need to be reframed by (a) using a postpositivist and coherentist epistemology, (b) using broad educative values so that policy communities can recapitulate education, society and democracy while also demonstrating how well learners have learned substantive content, and (c) breaking the accountability gridlock of technical, client and professional interests with participative policy action research to generate multiple legitimacies. Evidence from England and Wales suggests that the New Right politics of choice and the attempt to localise public accountability has instead generated a politics of resistance and sharpened demand for responsive, public and educative forms of accountability. It is hypothesized that neo-centralism is being challenged by a secular demand for subsidiarity, pluriformity and complimentarity.

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

A preliminary review of international policy research on accountability in education was commissioned in 1994 and reported to the 1995 AERA conference. The reports had substantial implications for future research. Jim Cibulka and Roberta Derlin (1996) demonstrated that performance reporting has become a common mechanism in US state education systems due to political pressures from economic and political elites, the public and professional educators. They also found evidence that a range of mechanisms have prevented these demands from becoming policies intended to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Their explanation was that these political, populist and professional forces both push for and pull against the integration of performance reporting in state policy making and reform programs. Performance reporting was sometimes part of the symbolic politics of system management, although, from time to time, the gaps between the rhetoric and the reality had to be attended to. One of the dangers they noted was that broader performance reporting could easily be cloned onto the deeply ingrained tradition of testing in the US. On the other hand, they found that performance reporting was still disconnected from other means intended to raise the legitimacy of state educational policies. They identified four key issues relating to the assumptive base of performance reporting policies. Should the processes used serve external accountability or internal improvement? Should performance data be prescribed or contextually-driven? Which framework is most appropriate for the

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selection of performance indicators? Which purposes, such as equity, choice or excellence, should performance reporting serve?

David Monk and Christopher Roellke (1996) argued that it is time to factor resources into the accountability equation in order to link such purposes to the quality of the delivery of educational services and to the production of educational outcomes. They propose a resource-based approach to accountability using indicators of actual educational opportunities. They illustrated its potential potency with data from New York state.

Apart from its technical merits, this approach revealed three issues fundamental to the production of educative accountability policies. First, how can systems relate purposes, resources and services delivery to the production of educational outcomes? Second, how can systems develop cooperative accountability policy making and implementation processes with an emphasis on open inquiry and collaboration between the state and its constituent units? Third, whatever indicators are eventually selected, how can accountability systems in education remain flexible and respect changing plural interests that are in competition?

The potential benefits and complexities of moving accountability policies from summative to serve broader formative functions was emphasized by Hanne Mawhinney's (1996) case study in Ontario. There the restructured context of policy making had imposed a new regulatory regime. Shifting political priorities, tighter regulations, new agency roles and standardized system structures were both facilitating and impeding the creation of the conditions considered essential to school improvement.

For example, the centralized preparation of 'classroom ready' curriculum, students being made accountable for learning outcomes, and communicating standardized levels of achievement in order to compare school performances were creating unhelpful capacities. Developing accountability frameworks that justified simplistic measurement, assuming that assessment and monitoring *would* boost school improvement, ignoring the lagged impact of reforms, leaving current financial management systems unchanged and allocating few resources for implementation were also seen as unhelpful. The primary research question revealed by this case study was how to ensure that system accountability policies are simultaneously holistic and effective in technical terms, politically sophisticated, and philosophically coherent with other administrative and educational policies.

Kam-Cheung (Andrew) Wong (1996) reviewed the implications for accountability policies by examining schools experimenting with a variant of school-based management (SMI) in Hong Kong. In keeping with many other international initiatives, the SMI has comprehensively revised the role of the central agency while increasing management responsibilities in schools, all intended to raise the quality of schooling.

Wong's findings were unequivocal. Enthusiasm for the changes was distributed hierarchically, paperwork had been greatly intensified and the new accountability framework had made no discernible difference to the quality of teaching. On the other hand there was evidence that a new teacher appraisal scheme offered an avenue for accountability policy development. Two inescapable questions followed. To what extent is it wise to negotiate and implement a new educative accountability policy in a school community without simultaneously reforming governance, management, teaching and learning policies and practices? How can such reforms proceed with a clear view of the purposes and nature of 'community'?

The third case study examined a large national system as a whole and revealed the close relationship between the coherence and the legitimacy of public policy. Ibrahim Bajunid's (1996) case study showed how the conceptual framework of current policies in Malaysia traced to the economic and social ideals of a political elite. Implementation was achieved partially through a powerful combination of traditional and centralist bureaucratic structures and practices. Policies were also being developed and changed using modern management methods that employed normative and re-educative techniques such as bench marking, TQM and targeted audits.

Ibrahim raised three issues worthy of further research. To what extent should comparative and indigenous perspectives determine appropriate policy content and process in national systems? To what extent are policies and policy making in education affected by historical context, practices in other portfolios and broader national public service values? To what extent are accountability policies in education determined by dominant theories of state?

Mac Macpherson (1996a) showed that iterative and cooperative research that links community to school and state can identify and legitimate accountability 'best practices'. Substantial and educative policy touchstone was found to be available in Tasmania, touchstone that is being used to evaluate and develop policies and practices at system and school levels. Follow up action research was recommended to reconcile technical, state, professional and consumerist interests using this touchstone in school and system policy communities.

This research also tested a particular way of characterizing the nature and production of knowledge, particularly the creation and reiteration of collective knowledge termed 'educational policy'. It was shown that policy grows through competition between ideas based on plural values. Tasmanian policy communities were shown to have tested evidence against their values and experience of consequences using pragmatic and coherence criteria, although ego, creativity and altruism each played a minor role. Three vital issues were highlighted. Which educational values should be used to justify accountability policies? Which theory of knowledge should underpin policy research intended to develop educative accountability processes and criteria? Which theories of learning, teaching, leadership and governance would cohere with an educative accountability policy?

These 16 questions constitute a formidable list of practical, theoretical and methodological challenges for policy researchers. Some of the relationships between potential dimensions, areas and issues for policy research are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Domains in international accountability policy research

Dimensions	Areas	Examples of Related Key Issues
Policy Content	Aims	External accountability or internal improvement.
	Values	Balance between quality, choice, equity ...
	Characteristics	Technical, political, philosophical sophistication.
Policy Process	Performance Data	Prescribed, contextually-driven, contestable.
	Knowledge	Epistemology and methodology.
	Power	The state, structures, relationships.
Policy Consequences	Education	Learning, curriculum, teaching.
	Administration	Management, leadership, organization.
	Community	Governance, society.

CHALLENGING A SIMPLISTIC DUALISM

Table 1 reminds us that the decades of debates over accountability policy in the US has been a "struggle over the soul of American public education" (Theobald and Mills, 1995, p. 462). The rhetoric appears to be warranted and to have international application. The turning point of the 'struggle' is clear. Beliefs about (a) what constitutes valuable knowledge, (b) how learning can be demonstrated, and (c) the appropriate role of leaders and governors in public education, determine how educational accountability is to be accomplished in practice.

Such beliefs, however, appear to have been polarized between the powerful, who have advocated batteries of tests to monitor schools and learning, and those who have argued that there are better methods than traditional testing to hold education accountable. Prominent advocates such as Dewey (1916) promoted democracy and community, cooperative learning, holistic curriculum and pedagogy with minimal assessment of individuals. Leading educational psychologists such as Thorndike (and Hagen, 1969) were far more successful at promoting the individualization of education, the disaggregation of curriculum into skills, competencies and concepts, teaching to behavioral objectives and the mass testing of outcomes. The historic dualism between hyper-individualism and communitarianism is summarised in Table 2 below.

The first challenge to the dualism has been epistemological in nature. Thorndike's approach to measurement and evaluation, and its handmaiden of scientific management (Taylor, 1911; 1947), proceeded using a version of science, positivism, that omitted values, politics, subjective experience and normative dimensions. Dewey relied on an early version of The Scientific Method; 'experimentalism'. While the term 'positivism' has been used in many ways (Phillips, 1983), it is no longer acceptable to base theories solely on observation reports and logic, and to use empirical concepts derived from observation. A postpositivist view of 'good science' suggests that observation is theory laden, that plural views of the world are one of many sources of knowledge about the world, and that knowledge grows holistically through competition between theories. Hence, educative accountability policy making needs to (a) set aside dualisms, (b) reconcile empirical, normative and subjective data using touchstone through the active engagement of stakeholders, (c) use this touchstone and a consequencialist moral theory to arbitrate dilemmas, and (d) use a coherence test of evidence (Evers and Lakomski, 1992; Macpherson, 1996b).

The second challenge to the dualism is axiological in nature. Instead of valuing a learner solely in terms of test scores and predicted destinies, and letting science both define and deliver a good life, it has been argued (Dewey, 1963) that what constitutes an educated person must be answered by communities, if they wish to remain communities. Accountability criteria and processes are required to connect deliberation about ethics, compassion, social justice and democracy to strategic evaluation and planning in educational systems and institutions so that learners and educators can refresh their understanding of civilized living.

It is pertinent here to note that, in recent times, the national debate in the US over educational choice has been conducted largely using two systems of metaphors; (a) laissez-faire visions of free individuals whose actions are harmonized by a beneficent market, and (b) communitarian appeals to the civic role that schools have in creating unified communities and responsible citizens (Margonis & Parker, 1995).

National assessment and curriculum policy making could have pre-empted a community debate over what knowledge should be learned, how it might be demonstrated and the role of wise leadership and governance. It seems that more educative accountability processes and criteria are needed to help communities recapitulate education, society and democracy, as well as show how well learners have learned substantive content. Both agendas are to be valued.

Table 2: Accountability in education and society

Dimensions of Accountability	Hyper-individualism	Communitarianism
Definition of 'learner'.	Individuals requiring education to achieve their potential and predictable destinies.	Members of society learning to be citizens while contributing to the character of local community.
Definition of 'educated person'.	Individuals who satisfy national standards or competencies in selected skills, attitudes and concepts.	A public project requiring local deliberation in matters of ethics, compassion, justice and democracy.
Learning theory	Linear process comprising input, information processing in ways explained by cognitive science, and measurable learning outcomes.	Building understanding through interaction between cultural beliefs, assumptions, media messages, stories, myths and formal instruction.
Best pedagogy	Individualized instruction using behavioral objectives	Facilitating cooperative learning in conditions of trust, self-direction and supportive social groups.
Formal curriculum	Valuable skills, attitudes, and concepts; authoritative knowledge.	Partitioned webs of belief governed by those with access to power.
Appropriate policy making agency	National curriculum and testing services.	School communities.
Disciplinary bases	Psychology, Scientific Management	Social Philosophy
Epistemology	Positivism; science creates truth.	Postpositivism; good science suggests the extent to which we should trust plural theories in competition.
Primary commitment	Maximizing the potential of the individual.	Developing democracy and community.
Purpose of accountability.	Measure learning and school achievements.	School-community evaluation of learning, teaching and leadership.
Appropriate accountability processes.	Objective assessment to measure students' grasp of facts, skills and attitudes.	Formative evaluation to assess and develop the depth and quality of understandings and plans.

The third challenge to the dualism is political and conceptual in nature. Some states have been providing legislation for 'charter schools' in the belief that more intensive local politics will break the accountability gridlock of technical, client and professional interests in public education and boost the development of schools and classrooms. Elmore and Associates' (1990) analysis of the competing perspectives is given in Table 3:

Table 3: Competing perspectives on accountability in education

Dimensions of Belief	Technical Perspective	Client Perspective	Professional Perspective
Conditions crucial for improvement.	Teaching, learning and leadership practices based on scientifically validated knowledge.	Educators account directly to their clients; parents, students and the community.	Educators and their immediate leaders develop skills, exercise judgment and control their work.
Strategic target of reform.	Core technology of schooling.	Power relationship between providers and clients.	Professionalism of teachers and school leaders.
Most appropriate reform strategy.	New knowledge, effective implementation and regular structural adjustments of powers and relationships.	Greater client choice, flexible resource management and policy responsiveness.	Provide occupational conditions featuring autonomy, respect, resources and expertise.
Most valued knowledge base.	Objective measures of school achievement and learning outcomes.	Inter-subjective views of political and market realities and stakeholder interests.	Collegial norms concerning effective learning.
Source of legitimacy.	Managerialism.	Consumerism.	Professionalism.
Most appropriate accountability processes.	Define purposes and performance indicators. Collect objective performance and outcomes data for use in the next planning round.	Political, market and managerial mechanisms. Clients help govern school policy, competition, external audits, and responsive HRD.	Professionals empowered to deconstruct and reconstruct schooling. Collaborative planning and cooperative teaching and learning.
Examples.	TQM. School improvement and effectiveness strategies.	Charters underpin school planning, management practices and evaluation.	Collaborative staff action research.

There are many reasons for doubting that more intensive local politics of educational choice will have the intended effects. First, from a 'professional' perspective, the consumerist, economically rationalist and New Right thinking involved in the politics of choice need not be taken too seriously when it is so evidently 'politically incorrect' (Macpherson, 1996c). Second, none of the chartering laws passed

in 11 states by the end of 1994 took a holistic view to provide accountability mechanisms that link district support, school improvement and classroom development (Wohlstetter *et al.*, 1995). Third, educational productivity research (Odden and Clune, 1995) suggests that current accountability structures in the US are not challenging poor leadership services, such as financial management, or encouraging 'best practice' teaching. Fourth, the nature of systemic structure itself needs to be far better understood if reforms are to gain greater coherence and to improve teaching practices (Cohen, 1995, Kirst, 1995; Elmore, 1995). Together, these research findings suggest that the dualism of hyper-individualism versus communitarianism needs to be set aside and that problem of accountability itself needs to be reframed. Evidence from international settings supports this suggestion.

SOME IDEAS FROM ENGLAND AND WALES

An interesting approach developed recently in Britain is to distinguish between contractual and responsive forms of accountability (Halstead, 1994, p. 149) and relate them to varying degrees of influence by major stakeholders. This has helped identify the merits and limits of different accountability models that might be employed in complex social systems to create multiple legitimacies.

Contractual accountability can be defined as the answerability of educators; their responsibility to demonstrate that they are satisfying the expectations of appropriate audiences. Responsive accountability is about taking into account the requirements of all interested parties when making educational policy and operational decisions. When they are contrasted with varying power of the partners in the tripartite relationship between employers, professionals and consumers, they produce six models of accountability (Halstead, 1994, pp. 149-162). The framework is summarized in Table 4 below, along with some of the more common limitations of each.

Table 4: Halstead's six models of accountability

Dominant Stakeholder	Contractual Accountability (answerability of educators)	Responsive Accountability (sensitivity to stakeholders)
Employer	***Central Control Model*** Teachers (employees) contracted to provide measurable learning. Testing and inspection considered appropriate methods. Can have low internal ownership or formative dynamics.	***Chain of Responsibility Model*** Decision-makers at each level in a hierarchy also responsive to legitimate stakeholders at their level. Can stimulate growth of bureaucracy, power struggles and structural ambiguities.
Professional	***Self Accounting Model*** Teachers (autonomous professionals) self monitor learning and teaching using internal and subjective methods. Can have low external credibility.	***Professional Model*** Contractual matters delegated to the governors. Matters of responsiveness delegated to the head and teachers. Can lead to localism and 'provider capture'.
Consumer	***Consumerist Model*** Teachers (providers) exposed to market and political mechanisms such as league tables, parental choice and LMS. Can intensify work and inequalities.	***Partnership Model*** Legitimate stakeholders pool options, interact critically, decide, plan and evaluate. Can lack external legitimacy and be undermined by local politics.

The overall framework itself presumes a liberal set of values, trustful interaction and generally shared views on the basic purposes of education. There is, therefore, some doubt that these liberal values would be accepted in multi-cultural settings or that accountability criteria and processes based on them would fully satisfy disaffected minorities (Whitfield, 1976, pp. 24-25). On the other hand, a crucial implication is that policy making will have to proceed nationally on three assumptions; (a) that a plurality of irreconcilable views prevails and will persist, (b) only general guidelines and partially ambiguous policy settlements will be politically viable, and (c) more politically sensitive operational policies will need to be articulated at more immediate and local levels.

This argument reiterates Kogan's (1987, p. 114) injunction:

> while there is no clear correspondence between levels and values being propounded, different types of assessments will be appropriate as we move from the relationship between individual teacher and the pupil through the different levels of the institutional system ... [which leads to] ... the problem of multiple legitimacies .... Institutional systems have to provide mechanisms for establishing priorities and resolving conflicts between different purposes and the tasks arising therefrom. So multiple purposes lead, logically, to multiple assessments.

The overall framework has other limits. The contractual models celebrate controlling the causal relationship between teaching and learning outcomes; a relationship that is deemed to be known or ultimately knowable. The responsive models honor stakeholder constructivism which, in turn, favors consensus over consequences and principles as the basis for the moral justification of policy claims. These are controversial positions.

Simultaneously, the models imply very different change strategies. The Central Control Model stresses managerialism. The Self Accounting Model recommends absolute professional autonomy. The Consumer Model trusts in the market. The Chain of Responsibility Model puts its faith in distributive justice while the Professional Model has confidence in 'the learning community'. The Partnership Model values democratic participation. While each of these models are contestable in specific situations, combinations are potentially useful in most, especially if we vary the combinations of capacity building strategies at different systemic levels in order to get the best multiplier effects (Corcoran and Goertz, 1995).

This leads me to suggest that multiple purposes in complex social systems will require multiple models being used in combinations, the combinations differentiated by organization and by level to generate multiple zones of policy legitimacies. This proposal, for subsidiarity in a context of public accountability, is now discussed, again with reference to the situation in England and Wales.

SUBSIDIARITY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

At the base of all social systems are relationships between people. Accountability structures express a fiduciary relationship between parties. This trustful relationship endures on the understanding that to be accountable is to be responsible, to be explicit about obligations and to be answerable. An accountability relationship is therefore defined as being a covenant between parties or stakeholders that exists in the

knowledge that outcomes could be used by one group to modify the actions of others. Like all covenants, accountability policy needs to be reiterated by practice, evaluated by research and improved by judicious reflection.

There have been four persistent impediments to the development of accountability policies in England and Wales. The structures of representative democracy have limited participation in educational governance (Fowler, 1978). Policy makers and structures have had limited technical capacity to convert complex and plural public values into effective policy settlements (Taylor, 1978). Even when earlier policy and practices have failed, in the public view, and have been replaced by newly mandated accountability policy and agencies, purposes and objectives have had to be negotiated with all stakeholders to gain provisional and conditional acceptance at each phase. The Assessment of Performance Unit was a case in point (Maclure, 1978; Nuttal, 1982).

The fourth impediment is that the principle of public accountability does not command automatic assent. Public educators in England and Wales have appropriated reserve powers concerning directions and judgments to do with their professionalism. This is all the more remarkable given the weight of history concerning professionalism developing in the public service since the 1500s (Charlton, 1965).

Table 5: The nature of professionalism derived from Renaissance England

Professional Dimension	Related Characteristics of Professional Service
Relationship with Client	Trust and confidence.
Code of Ethics	Public service and duty to the community.
Code of Expertise	Based on well-defined knowledge, including theoretical knowledge.
Preparation	Period of systematic training is provided, often in an institution.
Code of Practice	Organized and institutionalized to test the competence of members and to maintain expertise.
Socialization	Defined social group with its own hierarchy, social life and commitment.
Status	Claims and is accorded status based on salary, learning acquired at highest level, organization and solidarity, code of conduct and professional ethics, and independence.

There is, nevertheless, a consensus of resistance to political aspects of accountability that taints all other moral, contractual and professional obligations in public education. There are parallel symptoms in other parts of the world. The explanation in England and Wales appears to lie in the politics of education.

Briefly, the post-war Keynesian consensus began to unravel in the 1970s with the OPEC Oil Shocks. The collapse of faith in public education policies was accelerated from 1976 by the so-called Great Debate. It defined 'accountability in education' as a political issue and reduced it to but four matters; standards of achievement, curriculum content, participation by parents, and managerial responsibilities (Department of Education and Science (DES), 1977; DES/ Welsh Office, 1977; Becher, 1979). 'Public accountability in education' was co-opted by the state to justify (a) subordinating the

goals of education to the goals of the state, (b) transferring power from professionals to the state, and (c) to focus attention onto the means rather than the ends of accountability (Chitty, 1994). The metaphor of 'partnership' was displaced by 'accountability' in policy making, and the locus of educational policy making power shifted from the DES to Downing Street. The principle of public accountability in public education, expressed as a complex system of public checks and balances differentiated by level, was set aside.

The principle of systemic subsidiarity was also violated. A papal encyclical in 1931 declared that "it is a grave evil and a disturbance of right order to transfer to a larger and higher collectivity functions which can be performed and provided by lesser and subordinate bodies" (McBrien, 1980, p. 1044). It also means that "Any collectivity, before it usurps the power vested in the local body, must show cause why it can discharge that function better, more efficiently, more humanely, more skilfully" (Beare, 1995, p. 147). Not only was subsidiarity smothered by rampant centralism, so to were two corollary principles; pluriformity and complimentarity. Pluriformity is the encouragement, development and celebration of diverse problem-solving structures, while complimentarity encourages collegiality and co-operative action between diverse member units for the greater common good.

The principles of public accountability and subsidiarity were virtually rested at national levels when Margaret Thatcher's government came to power. The contestability of policy advice and the quality and credibility of accountability policies in education fell. The New Right intervention pressed hard until about 1992 when a more pragmatic search for a new policy settlement began. Nevertheless, a deep legacy of cynicism, simplistic policy dualisms and resistance by educators had been created, a legacy which tended to reinforce rather than reconstruct practices and norms.

The deep problems concerning accountability had long been known. Benchmark research by the Cambridge Accountability Project (Elliott, *et al.*, 1981) found that teachers saw accountability as a communication issue. They preferred not to review comparative powers of stakeholders, respond to complaints, broaden participation in school governance, modernize the curriculum and give greater consideration to legitimate external perspectives. They preferred instead to handle the problem of accountability with better image management. Similarly, there was no 'Golden Era' of school accountability managed by the Local Education Authorities (LEAs). While the evidence (Maychell & Keys, 1994; Radnor *et al.*, 1995) continues to indicate an enduring commitment to democratic pluralism and community participation in LEAs, accountability practices have long lacked coherence and comprehensiveness.

By the late 1980s there was a values vacuum and a growing legitimacy crisis. Stakeholders in complex structures had confused priority sets. Policy research, especially by Kogan (1986) as noted earlier, made it clear that a sophisticated accountability policy would have to acknowledge the complexity of structures in public education with levels of organizational purposes and tasks, and employ multiple assessments to establish multiple legitimacies.

The government took a very different and neo-centralist view. It saw a confluence of contested values and a policy paralysis expressed as simplistic dualisms. The New Right campaigned for intervention and two political circuit breakers were devised. The government nationalized curriculum and assessment, so that parents could exercise choice between schools, and undermined the power of LEAs and localized accountability through financial, managerial, political and market mechanisms.

The changes were legislated using the *Education Reform Act* (1988) and the *Education (Schools) Act* (1992). The general changes to accountability prescribed by the 1988 Act are set out in Table 6.

Table 6: The *Education Reform Act* (1988) and accountability

Area	Changes	Accountability Mechanisms
Curriculum	Introduced National Curriculum of core subjects (mathematics, English and/or Welsh, religious education, science), foundational subjects (history, geography, technology, music, art, physical education, modern foreign languages), and cross-curricular themes (e.g. European awareness).	Learning Attainment Targets at the end of Four Key Stages. Students are tested at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16. 'League tables' of results published.
Finance	Secretary of State to approve LEAs distribution of finances to county and voluntary schools, budget management powers delegated from LEAs to schools' Boards of Governors. Governors may delegate powers to the Head.	State steerage of LEA distribution formulae. Heads prepare program budgets and account to Governors.
Competition	Schools induced to opt out of LEA administration and to become 'Grant Maintained Schools' (GMS) and thus gain property rights, acquire property, contract independently, invest, accept gifts and invest. Grants to establish City Technology Colleges in urban areas may cater for 11-18 year olds, provide broad curricular with an emphasis on science and technology. Schools market themselves.	The enrolment market clears.
User-pays	Legalization of the power of schools to raise charges for extra services, provided parents have agreed.	Local fund raising and contracting.

Implementation strategies included the local management of schools (LMS) scheme and nationalizing and privatizing school inspection processes. The *Education (Schools) Act* (1992) directed the new Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) to organize a new form of inspection. The implications are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: The *Education (Schools) Act* (1992) and school evaluations

Area	Accountability Mechanisms	Forms of Accountability
National Roles	Chief Inspectors advise Secretary of State and report to Parliament using evidence gathered in schools by inspection teams. OFSTED and LEAs (or governors of GMS) identify institutions to be inspected.	Political accountability regarding quality of provision, standards achieved and efficiency of financial management. HMI down-scaled.
Regional Structure	Chief Inspectors regulate school inspections, train, select and register inspectors, monitor and provide guidelines for inspectors.	Regional contractual accountability. LEAs' inspection power co-opted.
Local Inspection	OFSTED sends list of inspectors to LEAs (and governors of GMS) who invite tenders. Schools generate required information. Inspecting teams lead by a registered inspector. Written report, summary and plan of action to the Chief Inspector, the LEA (or governors of GMS), and the public.	Public accountability according to state defined criteria and processes. Intense, infrequent, external scrutiny.

The OFSTED model triggered debate in two important areas. First was that the model made the use of quality evidence mandatory. There was a sudden focus on the validity and reliability of data and methods. Second, although perhaps not originally intended, the OFSTED model highlighted the capacity of each school to 'add value' to the relative advantages experienced by their students. The debate produced four main methodological candidates for collecting, reporting and using data about school performance that are still being debated; (a) external inspection, (b) reporting 'raw' examination results, (c) reporting scores adjusted for socio-economic status (SES), and (d) using adjusted scores to report school improvement strategies (Scott, 1994).

Unfortunately, these Acts and mechanisms did not recognize schools as communities or the limited extent to which consumerist and political mechanisms could actually achieve a major policy aim; provide moral accountability. They had little appreciation of the sense of security, significance and solidarity that characterize learning communities. Research (Levacic, 1992) also noted the immediate and considerable impact of LMS and its ambiguous relationship with the quality of teaching and learning. LMS had limited policy coherence with other initiatives controlled from the center; the assessment of student learning, school governance and school evaluation.

The current situation is probably best described as a contested policy settlement, however ideologically pluralistic and politically pragmatic the Dearing (1993) compromises have been. School governance remains mostly advisory in nature, well short of the legislated role of full and direct public accountability. The OFSTED model of school evaluation has improved steadily as an accountability methodology but is yet to discount SES effects, guarantee the reliability of inspectors, use 'value added' analysis to boost the improvement of schools, or triangulate with other review and accountability mechanisms in public education (Ouston & Klenowski, 1995; Shaw *et al.*, 1995; Radnor, *et al.*, 1995, Fidler, *et al.*, 1995; Levacic & Glover, 1995).

In sum, the purposes of, the coherence between and the technical reliability of accountability mechanisms and practices continues to be questioned by those empowered by recent legislation at different levels to exercise authority. Adequate and multiple legitimacies in the complex structures that comprise public education in

England and Wales are still some way off (OFSTED, 1994; Barber & Fuller, 1995). The general trend seems to be away from greater systemic coherence, so essential to policy legitimacy in public education, and towards greater local responsiveness and to more differentiated zones of legitimacy as school communities assert their legislated role in accountability. National politics appear to be reinforcing this trend.

The National Context

A significant source of resistance to all political forms of accountability in the UK is that a large majority of the public has virtually lost faith in the Westminster system of government (Linton, 1995). There is strong demand for a bill of rights (79%), a written constitution (79%) and a freedom of information act (81%). Over two thirds believe that the MP's code of conduct should be enforced by the civil and criminal courts and that the investigation of alleged misconduct should not be conducted by politicians. This is more than merely a matter of public opinion.

The Nolan Report (1995) found that the public's perceptions were broadly warranted and recommended the adoption of seven cardinal principles of public service, summarized in Table 8:

Table 8: Nolan's principles of public life

Principle	Specifications
Selflessness	Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
Integrity	Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
Objectivity	In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
Accountability	Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
Openness	Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interests clearly demands.
Honesty	Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to rake steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
Leadership	Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

It was generally expected that Lord Nolan's findings would lead to the reformation of governance policy. Instead, Government backbenchers rejected the need for reform,

attacked the messenger, and then attacked the Prime Minister for inviting the message (Wintour *et al.*, 1995). The British public delivered crushing judgments in following by-elections (Wintour & Clouston, 1995). What sustained this belief that the public can be manipulated by political process? The Scott Report (1996) and subsequent parliamentary debates (Norton-Taylor, 1996; Bevins & Ghazi, 1996; *The Guardian*, 16.2.1996) have shown that the government and the public service share a culture of duplicity, negligence and contempt for the basic tenets of democracy. The accountability vacuum has been shown to be causally related to the persistently low legitimacy of policy and government service. The need for public and moral forms of accountability in public affairs is acute.

This casts the centrally orchestrated drive "away from professional accountability for performance --- previously based on self-evaluation and peer review --- to more public forms of accountability, based on forms of evaluation such as external inspection or performance indicators" (Riley and Nuttal, 1994, p.124) in an unfortunate light. It can be speculated that this neo-centralist drive was intended to (a) insulate central government from having to account for public education, (b) through nationally determined curriculum, assessment and budgets, enhance its capacity to steer education policy, and (c) by providing *local* political, managerial and market mechanisms, ostensibly justified by a policy myth of greater educational choice, reconstruct and neutralise deep public concerns about the quality of government services.

This speculation is strongly supported by the extent to which national accountability policies are being contested and nature of technical problems being encountered (Gray and Wilcox, 1994, p. 9). There are many examples of parents and school governors resisting central government accountability policies. Despite incentives they tending not to 'opt out' of the LEAs. Instead of competing they are tending to cooperate. Instead of accepting reduced public resources they are flouting the law with deficit budgets. "Schools are establishing their own [in]formal networks of accountability that run alongside and contextualize the blunt, formal processes of OFSTED inspections and SATs" (Vann, 1995, p. 191). While governing bodies are still tending to provide supportive and advisory services, there is a steady trend towards them taking up and using their mandated public accountability duties (Keys & Fernandes, 1990; Earley 1994; Levacic, 1995).

In summary, the New Right attempt in England and Wales to create a *localized* politics of choice and public accountability is generating a politics of resistance and uncovering a latent desire for public accountability and subsidiarity in governance.

Interim Conclusions

There is international concern in education over the fundamental purposes of accountability, what counts as knowledge, how learning is to be demonstrated, the productivity of schools and the communitarian role of public schools. There is little evidence, in this era of locally managed public schools, of coherent systemic accountability policies. Such a policy vacuum is unwise in institutions and systems where technical, client and professional theories of accountability are in active competition. Professionals, administrators and clients all need to know that their views are being honored as reasonable expectations and being discharged publicly.

Basic standards of public accountability need to be evident in open and fair processes, by explicit criteria used in decision making and documentation, and by those

who make decisions being held accountable for them. Their absence exposes professionals to the corrosive effects of feral criteria, arbitrary process and low legitimacy. Educative accountability criteria and processes, especially performance data about learning, teaching, leadership and governance services, are essential to the creation of legitimacy in education policies and in practices. The evidence from England and Wales suggests that a neo-centralist attempt by the New Right to impose a policy myth of educational choice and local public accountability has encountered a politics of resistance.

It is hypothesized that a reframing of accountability policy research might need to review purposes, structures, processes and criteria in terms of subsidiarity, pluriformity and complimentarity, rather than assuming the existence, desirability or public preference for neo-centralist government.

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